

CPYRGHT

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Raborn Happy Choice to Head Sprawling Intelligence Agency

PRESIDENT JOHNSON may have been sure that the aid to education bill would be the most significant act of his presidency when he signed it Sunday, as he said for the record. Such is the world we live in, however, that the second announcement made at the LBJ Ranch press conference could prove more important to history's assessment of the Johnson era.

William Francis Raborn jr., new chief of the Central Intelligence Agency, is no ordinary man, and the agency occupies an extraordinary role in government. Like Gen. Hoyt Vandenburg and Allen Dulles, who were uncommonly suited to direct its activities when appointed, "Red" Raborn is an exceptionally happy choice.

He has shown he is able to handle great responsibility, to make quick and correct decisions, and to win and retain the confidence of congress. He is respected in the professional ranks of the military and government services, and in the business, technical, and academic worlds. The CIA will put all those assets to use.

Every president needs his own man as chief of CIA. Truman groped for a man who had all the right qualities, but the agency was new and unsure of its course, and even Vandenburg did not fill the bill in all respects. Eisenhower was more fortunate. Dulles was a real professional in the intelligence community, as his brother was in diplomacy. Even before his inauguration, Kennedy expressed his confidence in Dulles, whose resignation came much later, after the CIA had weathered the storm of criticism over the Cuban fiasco and several other crises.

When Truman first established the Central Intelligence unit in January, 1946, he envisioned a very small Washington correlation and evaluation staff, and a flexible operation abroad. By the time the statutory authorization came along, in the defense reorganization of 1947, it was evident a fairly large Washington contingent would be inevitable. By the time Eisenhower expressed regrets that the new building near McLean, Va., would only house 10,000 of the headquarters people, it seemed to many that things had got clear out of hand.

Raborn is the ideal administrator to bring efficiency to this sprawling but vital service. His work as project officer on the complex and hurried Polaris missile-and-submarine system is legendary, but is the obvious step that led to his new post.

From his 1924 appointment to Annapolis from Marlow, Okla., his long-delayed graduation as a naval aviator 10 years later, his service in World War II (he was at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941), and his emergence as a space age leader with broad technical competence, his whole career has been preparation for this new responsibility.

An intelligence maxim is that a man's judgment is no better than the information on which it is based. When the man is president of the United States, the information on which many critical judgments are based comes from, or is measured against data from, the CIA. That is why "a dusty dry kid with sand in his hair" who became a sailor in quest of adventure is now embarked on his greatest adventure.

So to Adm. Raborn, a confident "Bon Voyage"